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One Among Many: The Story of Cavey Lambert Methodist Circuit Rider

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ONE AMONG MANY: THE STORY OF CAVEY LAMBERT
METHODIST CIRCUIT RIDER: 1830-1873

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Lana Dee Lambert

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PREFACE

A paper of this sort, dealing with an obscure historical figure such as Cavey Lambert, must of necessity have a preface in which the author can prepare the reader for what is to come in the actual body of the text. This preface will show the author's reasoning in choosing the person as a topic, and what is to be gained by such a work.

Through the life of Cavey Lambert, I hope to show the importance of men such as him on the frontier--the way they lived, the work that they did, and the influence that they had on American history as it developed. Cavey Lambert is one of many like him, Methodism's traveling ministers devoted to their task of spreading the gospel to the layman, one of many who left their home and families for extended lengths of time to ride horseback across the countryside to places where they were needed. He was chosen because of the availability of his own handwritten account of his life, which provides not only historical facts but personal attitudes and experiences. This diary has been in my family for five generations, passing from Cavey after his death in 1873 to his son Charles Wesley Lambert, to his grandson Arthur Wesley Lambert, to Arthur's son (and my father) Paul Charles Lambert, and then to my generation. The diary

is now yellowed with age, but still thrilling reading for anyone who can translate the spidery handwriting. Quotations from the diary, which will be found chiefly in Section II, will not be footnoted because of the lack of pagination in the original manuscript.

This paper will begin by setting the scene for Cavey's arrival from England in 1830. The neighborhood in which he settled is known in Southern Illinois as Old Pinch or Enterprise, and is itself rich in historical color, being only five miles south of the Birbeck-Flower settlement of Albion, Illinois.

The second section in the paper will deal with Cavey's life as told in his own record of it, and as learned from the Southern Illinois Conference Records of the Methodist Church.

The third and final section will explain how Cavey's life illustrates the circuit rider's role on the frontier, how the people lived on the frontier, and will draw general conclusions to support the author's thesis that the circuit rider played a significant and important role in Southern Illinois during these years.

Certain acknowledgements should also be made for help given me during my research. To my father, Paul Lambert, for his help in reading the original diary, to William A. Briggs for the material he has collected on the history of Old Pinch, to the Mckendree Libraries

(v)

for the use of Conference records, and to Dr. Richard
D. Leonard for the moral support he has given me.

Lana Lambert.

Lana Lambert
May 1, 1963

SECTION I

THE SCENE: SOUTHERN ILLINOIS

"Keep a wagon-track in your eye...and you will find the prairie." These words introduce Charles Boewe's book Prairie Albion, the story of one small southern Illinois community. Yet they typify the spirit that stirred settlers to move westward in the 1800's. The prairie, unbroken, stretching wide to the eye, tall prairie grass waving, beckoned them to settle in the Midwest. One settler who arrived in 1818 has described the prairie as "warm sun, indented and irregular outline of wood, clumps of oak of centuries growth, tall grass(six to ten feet high)."¹ The prairie was a virgin land calling to settlers. The price of the land was not prohibitive--being only \$1.62 per acre or \$1,036 a section.²

The area to which the John Lambert, Sr. family was to come in 1831 is known to residents of southern Illinois as the land between the two Wabashes. The Big Wabash on the west winds through Wayne and White Counties joining the Big Wabash south of Carmi, Illinois. It is a small river, scarcely more than a creek in places. Morris Birbeck, one of the founders of Albion, Illinois, and

1. Boewe, Charles. Prairie Albion. Southern Illinois University Press. 1962. p.43.

2. Ibid. p. 74.

later Secretary of State (1824-1825) describes it in one of his letters back to England as "a sluggish scanty stream in summer, but in late winter and early spring (it) covers a great deal of space and rushes and rages."³

The precise area in which the Lamberts were to settle is titled now Old Pinch or Enterprise and is located on the southeastern edge of Edwards County. The county was named in 1814 after Ninian Edwards of Maryland and Kentucky who was appointed by President Madison to serve as governor of Illinois.⁴ The first settlers in Edwards County were squatters who lived for awhile on government land. The property was put on sale at the Government Land Office in Old Shawmeatown, Illinois in 1814. The county was designated by the state Legislative Council in 1814 to run "

beginning at the Mouth of the Bompast (Bonpas) Creek on the Big Wabash and running due west to the meridian line that runs due north from the mouth of the Ohio River; with that meridian line and directly north until it strikes the line of Upper Canada; thence with the line of Upper Canada to the line that separates this territory from the Indiana territory, and thence to the beginning...⁵

This vast area was retained for only two years and by 1824 had been cut to make Edwards County measure only 220 square miles. The county seat was originally designated as Palmyra (City of Palms). However, a near-by

3. Boewe, op cit. p.5

4. Dukes, Edgar L. Yester-Years in Edwards County. privately published, Albion, Illinois, 1950. p.46.

5. Dukes, ibid. p. 56. Bill of the State Legislative Council.

English settlement bearing the poetic name of Albion (White Cliffs) was begun in 1818 and rapidly gained prestige; in 1820 the county seat was removed by the legislature to Albion. Albion has been called the "little England" of Southern Illinois and much of the English influence can be still seen there in the old family names and records. The community began in 1818 under the guidance of George Flower and Morris Birbeck. They described their founding aims as "on these estates we hope to live much as we have been accustomed to live in England. But this is not the country for fine gentlemen or fine ladies of any class or description, especially for those who love state or require abundance of attendants."⁶ The founders thus desired to begin an unpretentious English community, inferring that it would be for those of the middle classes who could afford to come, but would not expect great luxury. The founders carried on an extensive advertising program in England for their community, describing it eloquently in pamphlets distributed in England, and urging settlers to join them on the American frontier. By 1830 the response was great and Albion was a prosperous frontier community.⁷ The city had a population of 4-5000 persons, good roads and streets, with an exceptional trail leading from Albion to

6. Boewe, op cit, p. 57.

7. See part II, quote from Charles Boewe, for a sample of this type of advertisement.

Palmyra, nice looking homes and cottages, a school system of high quality, and a large hotel. The settlers were not rough, as in most western towns, and Albion was considered one of the better English communities in the United States.⁸ The Lamberts (as will be discussed in Section II) spent their first winter in America in Albion before purchasing their own farm land.

Old Pinch or Enterprise (as it is now known), where the Lamberts finally settled, is the neighborhood with the best defined boundaries in Edwards County. On the north is Indian Creek, on the east the Bonpas Creek, (named by a Frenchman because it was so narrow it could be crossed with one bon pas, or good step), on the south Nigger Creek (named after a settlement of free colored citizens on its north bank) and on the west the Meridian Road. The area is thus about five square miles, and clearly marked.⁹

The weather in this Midwestern area, the "Eden between two rivers" as the Indians called it, ranges from extremely humid and warm to severe cold and snow. The large number of creeks and rivers rise in the spring, flooding the excellent farm land along the river bottoms. The area has been called the "utopia belt of a great midland." Many of the settlers recognized

8. Beewe, J. C. Other Illinois. Duell, Sloan, & Co., New York, 1901.
 9. Briggs, W. A. A History of Old Pinch or Enterprise. V.I. privately published. Indianapolis, Indiana. p. 1

this and also "wanted a place far enough south to escape the brutal cold of the North, and far enough north to escape the brutal slavery of the South."¹⁰

Life in this area, however, was not entirely a Utopian existence. As stated before the rivers rose during the spring, flooding a large number of the farms. There were few doctors residing in the area and diseases ran rampant. The measles, the mumps, the flu, or even the common cold could spread into a wide epidemic in a few days because of lack of medical care, and lack of sanitary provisions. Cavey Lambert as we shall see, fathered fifteen children, of whom only three survived past the age of eighteen months. Woman and infants often failed to survive the ordeal of childbirth because of the lack of medical care. The general living conditions were difficult and strenuous under the best of circumstances.

The area was primarily a farming community. Cultivation during the first few years a plot was farmed was difficult because of the tough gnarled weeds of the prairie grass. The first few years however, the tough prairie grass roots prevented the growth of other weeds. But, after a year or two of cultivation the roots decayed and cultivation to exterminate weeds became necessary. Corn, wheat, oats, and the different kinds of hay raised to

10. Brownell, Baker. The Other Illinois. Duell, Sloan, and Pearce. New York, 1958. p. 93.

feed cattle and hogs comprised the main crops. In addition potatoes were raised for a while as a commercial crop. Flax and cotton were raised and spun until the slave-labor, rapid transportation and the factory spinning and weaving made it possible to obtain cloth easily and cheaply. Many of the settlers raised their own tobacco for smoking and chewing, and many also grew castor beans to press into castor-oil for medicinal purposes. Almost every farmer manufactured his own sorghum and sweetening. One of the first requisites for a settler was the establishment of a mill for grinding grain. Various types were found in southern Illinois, including ox-mills, water-mills, team-mills, hand-mills and wind-mills. David Lambert, younger brother of Cavey, established a cane mill in Pinch that served the entire neighborhood in the late 1860's and 1870's.¹¹ The maintenance of the farms and the crops produced were the chief concerns of the settler.

A second concern was entertainment. In large part, the southern Illinois settler, just as settlers elsewhere, found it necessary to provide his own entertainment. Examples of this are found pulls, "nutting" expeditions (gathering nuts in the fall in the river bottoms), barn-raisings, and water-melon festivals. All amusements were simple--the main one for men hunting, and for women, as in all times, gossip.

In addition town balls and singing fests were held. By

11. Briggs, op cit, p. 48.

the 1850's traveling exhibitions had begun to appear, beginning the modern trend toward spectator amusements.¹²

The religious feelings in Southern Illinois have been termed a worship of the "revival God."¹³ The area is predominantly Protestant, especially in the south-eastern Illinois settlements, which were primarily English and Scotch-Irish. The main sects were the Baptists, (in particular the Southern Baptists), the Presbyterians (who migrated upward from Kentucky and Tennessee) and the Methodists. Methodism in Illinois began in 1801 and carried on strong throughout its history. The Methodist Church brought with it an implied organization--an aristocracy of service presided over by the bishops and ruled by the circuit riders.¹⁴ These circuit riders travelled wide ranges and influenced the lives of the majority of those with whom they came into contact. These circuit riders often had from a dozen to a score of "appointments" (or designated preaching engagements) to fill on their circuits. They were not only a source of religion, preaching the gospel and reading the rules at every stop, but also of information and news (both political and social), of postal service (at times forwarding messages from neighbor to neighbor) and even agricultural advice. These circuit riders retained a voice in the

12. Johnson, Charles Benewlyn. Flanigan-Pearson Company. Illinois in the Fifties. Champaign, Ill. 1918. p. 76.

13. Brownell, op cit. p. 191

14. Pease, T.C. The Story of Illinois. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois. 1949. p. 170.

wide-spread affairs of the Church as long as devotion and bodily strength enabled them to ride and preach. Below them, as a strengthening base, were the super-annuated ministers, who lived in one permanent residence. These super-annuated ministers had no voice in the government of the church but served in an active role in their own community, combining their talents in teaching and fortifying the converts.¹⁵

The Revival God of Southern Illinois confined the mind and emotions of the people who served him. In this country religion was more tortured than it is now. A convert violently confirmed his conversion, and a sinner bitterly repudiated the Christian teachings. The religion controlled the social life of believers in a way that was much more public than it is now. The Methodists attempted to substitute the exuberant religion of revivalism for the coarser pleasures of the frontier.¹⁶ Camp meetings and revivals were occasions of great spirit at which the members regained zeal, and non-members got "religion," in the old fashioned sense. These tent or camp meetings were frequently held because the minister was often able to reach each of his appointments only once a month, and then at night or on a weekday. Camp meetings were planned by the ministers while at conference and care was taken not to hold them too close to one another in an area at the same time, so that all in the area would

15. Pease, op cit, p. 171.

16. Brownell, op cit, p. 82.

be able to attend. The time chosen was usually in autumn when farm work was slack. These meetings attracted many who were uninterested in religion but ended up converted. It has often been said that as many came to scoff as to pray. However, the revivals were a means, and a quite effective one, of drawing more people into the folds of the church and of increasing the members' faith and spirit. The mourning bench, on which the seekers after the faith sat to pray and show their concern for the quest, was frequently in use. The preachers brought fiery gospels of hell-fire and damnation, and salvation was regarded as an occasion of great emotion and rejoicing. These camp meetings and revivals were sometimes held at the same time as the quarterly meeting to which the Presiding Elder and several ministers came.¹⁷ Others were held simply to bring the people of a neighborhood together. It has been noted that some zealous members attended three or four such meetings each autumn.

This religious fervor was not confined merely to these meetings, but was spread to every congregation that the circuit rider met. In addition to these circuit riders there were two classes of ministers to aid them--the local preachers, who were licensed to preach on the circuit by the circuit rider, and the exhorter, who was licensed to give testimonials. Each area on the circuit was organized into a class, which had a leader and held

^{17.} Johnson, op cit, pl 58.

its own things during the absence of the pastor, led by an exhorter or local preacher.

The circuit riders in Southern Illinois were not uneducated men, usually having either formal religious training at the Lebanon seminary (established in 1828) or by a rigid self-training program. The Annual Conference of 1827, held at Mt. Carmel, Illinois, set forth the necessary things a circuit rider must know as follows:

The Holy Ghost saith; "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Hold fast the form of sound words which thou heard from me, in faith and love which is in Jesus Christ." Given attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. It is therefore recommended to candidates for the ministry to study and make themselves acquainted with the following important points of doctrine: the general depravity and corruption of the human heart, redemption by Christ, repentance toward God, justification by faith, the direct witness of the Holy Spirit, holiness of heart and life, including regeneration and sanctification, the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, the perseverance of those who have been justified, baptism, the resurrection of the dead, and future rewards and punishments. It is recommended to them to study the nature and principles of Church government, especially our own; the philosophy or grammar of the English language; geography; ancient history; ecclesiastical history; moral and natural philosophy and logic. To aid the student in the acquisition of these important branches of knowledge, the reading of the following books, or as many of them as can be obtained, is recommended; The Holy Scriptures, Wesley's Notes, Benson's, Coke's and Clarke's Commentaries, Wesley's Sermons, Answer to Taylor, Saint's Rest, Benson's Sermons, Fletcher's Checks and Appeal, Portrait of Saint Paul, Watson's Theological Institutes, Wood's or Martindale's Dictionary, the Methodist

Discipline, Murray's Grammar, Norse's Geography, Rollin's Ancient History, Mossheim's Ecclesiastical History, Lock on the Understanding, Paley's Philosophy, Duncan's or 18 Watt's Logic, the Methodist Magazine. (sic)

It can be seen from this that the minister had several areas in which he was required to be well-versed--- the doctrine of the church, the language of the people, philosophy, geography, ancient and ecclesiastical history, and logic. Through these fields of study the minister could prepare himself for the world wide work of the church.

Within the Methodist Church operated several organizations to carry out its work. These included Committees on Missions, Education (which founded such institutions as McKendree College and the Southern Illinois Female Academy), the Temperance Union, the Tract Cause (which worked closely with the American Tract Society, one of Cavey Lambert's favorite causes), and the Sunday School Committee. Conference wide revivals and camp meetings were also held to promote religious feeling.

The church included both Negro and white members, although they were counted separately, and in Illinois during the Civil War worked for the freedom of the slaves in the South.

The church worked against what it considered to be decadence in frontier life. Temperance was a large issue, and Edwards County eventually become one of the few "dry" counties in the state.¹⁹ The circuit riders

18. Leaton, James. Methodism in Illinois. Walden and Stow, Cincinnati, Ohio. pp 259-260.

19. For Cavey Lambert's attitude on this, see Section II.

gambling (whether dice or card-playing), dancing, and theft, and exclusive organizations. An example of this can be seen at the General Conference of 1825 at which Ebenezer T. Webster was ~~refused~~ election as an Elder because of his connection with the Freemasons.²⁰ As has been stated earlier, they attempted to substitute religious enthusiasm for the magnetism of such pastimes.

Religion and Methodism thus played an important role in the settlers' life. It was so influential that though usually no churches were built, meetings were often held in the public buildings--the schools and court-houses.²¹ Separation of church and state was virtually unknown in the rural community. Many of the circuit riders even doubled as school teachers and politicians.

Methodism in the area we are most concerned with, Old Pinch, was extremely important. The first family in the area, the Dewhirst family (cousins of the Lamberts and the family of Cavey's bride) was of the Wesleyan Methodist movement in England. However, in the early years denominational lines in Pinch were largely ignored because of the scarcity of settlers. In 1825 a Methodist society was taking form, but in 1833 an organized Union Church (for all denominations of the Protestant faith) was formed which later became affiliated with the Congregational Church. However, the neighborhood remained pre-eminently Methodist and the Class continued to meet, occasionally visited by a minister from the Wabash

20. Leaton, op cit, p. 301.

21. Johnson, op cit, p. 58.

circuit. The Methodists joined ~~in the~~ erection of Union Church, but remained a separate denomination. In 1834 a second class formed, of which Cavey Lambert was leader. From this start Methodism continued in this neighborhood much as in the rest of Southern Illinois, playing an important role.²² It was into this climate that the Lambert family had migrated.

By the 1850's the real pioneer days on the frontier were rapidly drawing to a close. Frame houses were being built to replace the cruder cabins and more conveniences were available to the settlers. The railroads and roads were becoming more developed and offering better transportation. The chief means of travel was still the horse but now he traveled on better roads rather than merely on trails. Thus the end of the life of Cavey Lambert was lived more comfortably, though far from being unrugged. The Civil War Years brought even greater advancements and greatly improved the standards of living for the frontiersman of the West.

This brief sketch of the prevailing circumstances during the life of our protagonist should give the reader a context into which to place Cavey Lambert's life. Let us then turn to the man himself.

22. Briggs, op cit, p. 44.

SECTION II

THE MAN: CAVEY LAMBERT

Cavey Lambert was born at Haxey, in the county of Lincolnshire, England on January 1, 1809. He was the son of John and Ann Lambert. His father, John, was by trade a clock-maker and farmer, and the family was, by the standards of the day, well-to-do and moved in the upper middle class. The children received an education well above that of the average of the time. Cavey tells us that his parents were not religious when he was small but his mother "early taught me (Cavey) with the other children, to repeat the Lord's Prayer, with other short prayers, when going to bed at night. At six years of age, I (Cavey) learned the catechism of the Church of England. My attention was called to reading plain and easy parts of the Bible and other good books. Some time after this, Cavey accompanied an uncle several times to hear a Calvinist minister. Calvinism and Calvinist preachers were then at a vogue in England and many of the middle class were turning to the Calvinistic faith especially because of its justification for capitalism through the doctrine of predestination and the supremacy of the Elect. This inclination has been explained by historians through

theories such as the Weber thesis. Cavey's family fell into this middle class classification and it is understandable that his uncle frequently took the young boy to hear Calvinist ministers. Cavey says of the experience "...his preaching did not much attract my attention; yet the Hymns sung did, many of which I remember to this day." These statements concerning his early religious training are made in the light of Cavey's later strong religious convictions, and show a truly Christian search for God. He says of this attraction to hymns and the Church "The spirit of the Lord was entwining about my heart."

Cavey's acquaintance with the Methodists began in his twelfth year when both his parents joined the Methodist Church. John, the father of the family, had refused the Calvinist Doctrines of predestination and was opposed to the Church of England because of its extremely formal organization and dogmatism. His wife, and Cavey's mother, Ann, leaned strongly toward the Church of England as is evidenced by Cavey's learning of that Church's catechism and prayers. Yet she was a loyal wife and when her husband gave the Methodists his strong support, she joined his sentiment. No record exists which shows whether the church they joined was the Primitive, the New Connection, or the Wesleyan Methodists, but we can be sure

that it was not the Methodist Episcopalians for they were not organized in England at that time.²³ It seems probable that the family was affiliated with the Wesleyan Methodists, the same as their cousins, the Dewhirsts. The family home in Haxey became a stopping place for traveling Methodist ministers, the family altar was erected, and the entire family regularly attended religious services. Cavey says that from this time he "... was a subject of almost constant convictions, but I resisted the Holy Ghost, and it's of the Lord's Mercy (that) I am not consumed." The situation in England during these years grew gradually worse in all spheres, financial, moral, religiously, and governmentally. The circumstances became such that in 1829 the family made the decision to migrate to America. They chose as their destination Edwards County, Illinois, the site of the renowned "Little English" settlement, Albion, Illinois. Albion had been founded in 1818 by Morris Birbeck and George Flower, and the settlement was known to Englishmen throughout the young United States and in the mother-country. Those traveling in the mid-west never failed to visit it and describe it in glowing terms as a place where Englishmen remained truly English. The founders sent pamphlets to England to interest new settlers in the territory. One of these pamphlets probably fell into the hands of the

23. Briggs, op cit. p. 71

Lambert family, and influenced their desire to settle in Illinois. The authors of these pamphlets first described the area to the prospective settler and then posed several questions to him to determine his desire to settle in the United States:

First, Is it essential to your prosperity and happiness that you leave England?

Second, Do the habits and character of the American people afford you rational grounds for desiring to become their fellow citizens?

Third, Have all of you the dispositions required to become cultivators of the wilderness?

Fourth, Assuming that you have those dispositions, are you fitted for such an entire change of pursuits and can you endure the difficulties and dangers necessarily attendant on such a situation?²⁴

The author then added a comment of his own after posing these questions, saying:

If, after cool, deliberate and rational consideration, with your minds as free from enthusiastic expectations connected from this continent as well as they can be under the present order of things in England, you can answer in the affirmative, then I have little doubt of the propriety of recommending to your attention the Illinois territory.²⁵

In this pamphlet can be seen an indication of the circumstances in England that prompted the Lambert family to leave England, and choose Edwards County as their settling place. In 1829 they sailed from Hull as a party of eight, Cavey (age twenty) his brother David (age fourteen), his sister Mrs. Sarah Lambert Curtis, her

24. Boewe, p. 89, op cit.

25. Ibid, p. 89.

husband Richard D. Curtis, their two small daughters Ann and Selina, and the parents John and Ann Lambert, Senior. In August of 1829 they arrived in Albion, Illinois, and spent the winter there while looking for land to settle on. By March, the father and son had decided upon a tract of land, and Edwards County Records show that on March 4, 1830, Cavey entered the east half of the northwest of section thirty-one (he had recently passed his twenty-first birthday and was able to be a legal landholder) and on March 22, 1830, his father entered the west half of the south-east quarter of section thirty. The cost of the land was only \$1.25 per acre but had to be paid in cash. The family business in Haxey had been sold before leaving England, and had evidently brought quite a large sum of money that was used both for the passage across the ocean and for the land purchase. The two tracts purchased were joined at the northwest-southeast corner, Cavey's tract being prairie, his father's timber, making the two an ideal combination. Only one house was built, believed to be on Cavey's tract for two reasons (1) that it was prairie and would not have to be cleared, and that logs from his father's timber land could be used, and (2) an old well that lies today on the south forty of the prairie tract and would have provided a water supply for the family. The Lamberts evidently had good farm equipment, for in July of 1831

they drove to Mt

bring a group of nine friends from Haxey to settle in the Edwards County Old Pinch neighborhood. The father John continued purchasing land and eventually became one of the largest resident land holders in the southern part of the state.²⁶

Cavey, in his diary, tells us that in Edwards County the public means of grace were "few and far between; and Infidelity stalked forth with a bold front." He says of his own attitudes at this time "Although very wicked I despised Infidelity; but I seldom went to meeting, it being four miles of me, and preaching (was) on week-days."

Events in 1831-32 caused Cavey to increase his religious feeling. In the spring of 1831 one of his cousins (probably a Dewhirts) was killed trying to yoke a steer. This made a "deep impression on (his) mind." On July 14, 1831, he was married to his cousin Charlotte Dewhirst who had recently arrived from England. Cavey says of his marriage "Here the providence of God was singularly displayed in leading me to this choice. My wife had joined the church as a seeker of religion, sometime before our marriage." The third event that influenced his religious conscience greatly was a tragedy--the death of his dearly beloved sister, Sarah Lambert Curtis. The death

had a profound effect upon him and he "made many vows to serve the Lord, and with the consent of my partner (Charlotte) (I) attempted to set up the family altar." This attempt was not successful for in speaking of the same family altar he says that he "frequently let it fall down." June 15, 1832 his first son John was born and his attendance at meetings increased. He had one favorite minister, the Reverend James Headley and went to hear him at every opportunity. Of these meetings he says that he "nearly every time resolved to join the Church, but broke my vows again and again." On August 6, 1833, he recounts that for the first time he opened his mind to the people of God and asked them to pray for him and the salvation of his soul. He describes a camp meeting of the time, held on August 13, 1833 that shows how the spirit of his conversion and the spirit of a revival operated. "On the 13th of August (he says) I went to a Camp meeting..to seek the salvation of my soul. The first sermon preached was on this text "What shall I do to be saved?" the preacher a good man. (He) spent most of the time allotted for preaching in controversy, this did not meet my case. At night the Reverend James McKine preached. His text was "Be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer." His solemn manner of address, his earnest appeals to his hearers, forceable, struck me, the word reached my heart. He was

followed by Brother Joseph Carton, of blessed memory, who closed his exhortation by inviting mourners to the Altar I went forward, but unbelief kept me from obtaining the blessing. Late in the night, the Reverend Archibald Roberts opened the door of the church and I, with others, went forward and joined the Methodist Church."

This excerpt from his diary shows Cavey's earnestness in seeking the Lord and his fervor at the revival for he remembers for a number of years even the texts of the sermons preached. His conversion, however, was not yet completed for he says in his diary a little later: "Here I resolved to take up every cross and if I perished, I would perish crying out for the Lord. After returning home I told my partner(Charlotte) what I had done and we now resolved to erect the family altar resolving with the help of God, to never let it go down. Some days after this, the hand of the Lord was heavy upon me. I was truly weary and heavy laden. After the morning family worship, I retired into my corn field to pray, and remained until the middle of the afternoon, and then God, in Mercy, spoke peace to my soul. I had not great emotion, or joy, but I had 'peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.' I went to the house and told my wife what God had done for my soul. She never

rested until she had obtained the same blessing."

After this experience Cavey threw himself fervently into the work of the church. His second child Nancy was born September 8, 1838, and in February, 1834, the meeting class in the Wabash Circuit of the Methodist Church was divided, the new one being organized in Bonpas Prairie with seven men and their wives as members. Cavey was appointed leader of the class, which remained as part of the Wabash Circuit, but was strongly soliciting to the Presiding Elders for preaching in the Bonpas Prairie neighborhood. The minister on the Wabash Circuit, Reverend James Walker, could not give it, and with Brother Walker's consent, Cavey, as leader of the class, met with the minister of the Mount Carmel Circuit. The class was taken into that circuit and received preaching services. This periodical preaching was not sufficiently frequent to meet their desires. Cavey then "feeling it my duty to aid sinners to seek the Lord, with the consent of the class, Brother McMuntry gave me a verbal license to exhort. With much fear and trembling I tried to warn Sinners to flee from the wrath to come." Cavey thus began his career as an exhorter. At the next quarterly meeting the Conference of the Mount Carmel Circuit renewed his license to exhort and he continued his work.

The Lamberts' third child, David, was born February

12, 1835. At the secondly quarterly meeting of 1835 Cavey was licensed as a local preacher in the Methodist Church. He continued leading the class and exhorting in his own neighborhood. As is well know, the health standards and child care during this period were sadly inadequate. The youngest child David became ill and died in September, not yet one year old. Cavey says of this experience "this was a trial not yet experienced but through grace I was enabled to kiss the rod, and bless the hand divine." In just one month after this occurrence the fourth child of the couple, another boy, Charles Dewhirst Lambert, was born. During this year Cavey greatly increased his activities as local preacher, but resisted the urging of the circuit minister that he join the circuit riders on the Conference. He continued to aid the ministers while working as a farmer on the land that he shared with his family. In 1837 the couple became parents of twins both of whom died within months after their birth. In September of the same year (1837) the youngest son Charles died. Cavey bore these griefs quietly telling us that "the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Cavey tells us little of the years 1838-1839, but does describe several revival meetings that he attended. He became a father once again, in July of 1839, only to lose the child Joseph in August. He was evidently re-

conciled to the loss of his children to childhood disease, for he does not bewail the child's death and spoke of year as one of great prosperity, during which the work "of God went on gloriously." The last quarterly meeting of the Charge recommended Cavey to the Conference for ordination as a Deacon, and on September 17, 1840 he was ordained by Bishop Waugh. That winter he also taught school for three months (at the salary of \$36.00) and his wife bore him another child, Jabey. In the year of 1841 he was appointed to the office of Circuit Steward, and began to devote more time to the Church. In September of 1841 the child Jabey died, before reaching his first birthday.

Cavey again taught school in the winter of 1841 and also helped, with other local preachers, to carry on a local revival while the regular ministers were away at Conference. Cavey preached several sermons and tells us that "the Lord manifested himself in power. Sinners were converted and the people of God greatly blessed."

In July of 1842 the family underwent another great health trial--Cavey tells us that he "experienced personal and much family affliction." The entire family, including Charlotte became infected with the measles. The disease brought about premature childbirth and the ninth child of the family, another son Solomon, was born.

He lived only two months, the seventh child of the couple to die in infancy.

The winter of 1842-43 saw Cavey with his brothers travelling down the river in a flatboat, headed toward New Orleans through the course of the Wabash, Ohio, and Mississippi Rivers. The venture was not successful, the boat sunk, and the brothers lost nearly all they had in the boat. The summer of 1843 was a troublesome one--Cavey suffered from an inflammation of the liver and was unable to work through the harvest, and in September, additional tragedy befell the family. His father, John, at the age of 80, died. He tells us that despite these personal troubles he rejoiced that the year was a good one for the Conference. The circuit on which the Finch Neighborhood was located was made much smaller and renamed the Lawrenceville Circuit. More people attended class meetings and preaching. Two good camp meetings were held.

The couple became parents again in August of 1844 to a son, Thomas, who lived until September of 1845. In October of 1846, a daughter, Elizabeth was born.

In 1844 Mr. and Mrs. Cavey Lambert joined with several others in the neighborhood to hold and lead a camp meeting. The location chosen for the meeting was near their farm, where the ground was high and dry, and a near-by pond could be dug for watering the horses of

who were attending the meeting. One of the ministers at the meeting was the renowned Peter Cartwright, from whom Cavey undoubtedly gained much inspiration for his later career. This was termed later "a good meeting" and is probably one of the ones from which Cavey emerged with strengthened spirit and more fully prepared for becoming a circuit rider himself.

In September of 1847, Cavey became an agent for the American Tract Society, first in Edwards and then in Wayne and Wabash Counties. The American Tract Society had been founded in New York in 1825. Its purpose was to spread evangelical Protestant doctrines throughout the land. The doctrines it enunciated were thus very broad in order to be acceptable to all members of Protestant churches. The society was well supported financially and had a vast output of material. Some of the more important publications included a fifteen volume work entitled Evangelical Family Library, and a twenty-five volume Religious Library. A paper, Christian Messenger, was also published and widely circulated. The Society also cooperated with Temperance, Bible, Missionary, and Sabbath Societies in printing and circulating their literature. Also published were histories, biographies, devotional works Pilgrim's Progress. More interesting were the pamphlets

put out by the society dealing with such topics as "The Evils of Excessive Drinking," "The Ruinous Consequences of Gambling," and "Divine Songs for Children." These pamphlets and the books published by the society were powerful and effective in disseminating Protestant Doctrines.²⁶ In this work Cavey travelled extensively, making available to the Protestant settlers the various religious pamphlets and books. This then was work not just for the Methodist Church, but for the entire Christian and especially Protestant faith.

Cavey's religious work was gradually superceeding his farm labor. In September of 1848 Cavey attended Annual Conference in Belleville, Illinois and was ordained Elder by Bishop Morris. He attended camp meetings throughout southern Illinois during this period traveling in the company of a group of various circuit riders. In January of 1849 another child, Jacob, was born and lived until November of the same year.

In April of 1850 because of need Cavey became a circuit rider, consenting at the request of the Presiding Elder to ride the Olney Circuit for the remainder of the year, the appointed minister having left. On April the 1st, 1850 he left home for the first time for his circuit. On this charge he preached not in churches, but in homes, school houses and court houses.

26. Olmstead, Clifton. History of Religion in the United States. Prentice Hall Company. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey. 1960. p. 293.

He tells us of his feelings at the first meeting he held of leaders of local parishes held in Olney, Illinois on April 8, 1850. "Here I felt the weight of responsibility of having charge of a Circuit, with all its pains, and felt the need of being well versed in our excellent discipline." He gives us impressions of the people on his charge in such phrases as "the cause of God is very weak here, no class leader, and the class book lost," "here are some warm hearted Methodists," or "put up at the son of one of my old friends but found him a prodigal indeed."

After his start on the Olney Circuit Cavey began to keep his diary by days, recording where he preached, the text of his sermon, where he stayed for the night, and the religious attitude of the classes he preached sermons to. He records the proceedings of the quarterly conference telling of the Fast Day, and the Love feast. He also tells us that "the Stewards not having provided it, the Lord's Supper was not administered." On April 24, 1850 he returned home from his circuit and found on his arrival that all was well. His first round on the circuit had taken twenty-four days, including four spent at Quarterly Conference. His orientation as a circuit rider was begun. His words of thanks upon arriving at home to find all well are echoed throughout the sketch of his life, "Thanks be to God for his goodness to me and mine." When he speaks of a funeral

he often refers to good and honest church members as "Old Soldiers of the Cross" and extolls their virtues highly, i.e. "Brother West was a good man. I have known him many years--his path was that of the Just, shining more and more to the perfect day."

On July 6, 1851 Cavey attended a quarterly meeting, the first since he had been put on a circuit and at which the regular examination of character took place. He says of this examination "I felt the responsibility to be great, but the Lord sustained me." His character duly passed the routine examination, as it did on all subsequent occasions.

Cavey was by this time a grandfather. His daughter Nancy had married and bore a child. No record can be found of the date of this marriage, but we know that Nancy was now a woman of eighteen years. Cavey speaks of taking the daughter and her child home for a visit during one of his trips around the circuit. At the next quarterly meeting that was held Cavey promised the Presiding Elder that he would continue to travel rather than become a settled minister as his family could not be moved at this time.

Cavey continues to keep his diary day by day, telling where he preached. An interesting episode during this year is a sermon preached by one of his laymen Old Grandfather Monical, a "man of 88 years who preached

on the text "acquaint now theyself with him, and be at peace and then by good shall come upon thee." (sic) Cavey says "While the old veteran of the cross stood tottering under the weight of years, expounding the sacred truth of God's Word, with a countenance expressive of the Happiness of his soul, sinners were made to tremble, and saints shout for joy." He later discusses a revival at which the preaching was shared with another circuit rider, describing it as a "truly solemn time. At the end Mourners were invited to come forward, the Lord was present to heal, and the shouts of new born babes were heard in the Camp." Concerning a later meeting, his last appointment for the year on the Olney Circuit, at which little apparent good seemed to have been accomplished Cavey does not show disappointment but says instead "it is the Lord's own cause and we leave it in his hands." Cavey describes the life of a circuit rider, and a circuit rider's wife when he speaks of a funeral he preached for the Widow Reed. "For more than thirty years she shared with her husband the toils of an itinerant wife."

During the years of 1851, Cavey was admitted on trial as a minister in the Illinois Conference and supplied the Lawrenceville Circuit. His wife bore another child, a still-born infant. In describing the

year Cavey says "The whole of this year was a year of every constant labor, my colleague and I, Brother Reed, preached twenty-eight times and rode three hundred miles in twenty-eight days. But never he says "could preachers pull better together than we (Brother Reed and Cavey) did." At Conference time he states "This year I have preached three hundred and thirty times, traveled upwards of 3,000 miles. We took into the Church about seventy members...and on the whole we had a pleasant year."

Cavey in 1852 was received by the Conference and was appointed to the Newton Circuit. He left his son John to live on his farm and with the rest of his family departed for his field of labor. He says "(I) expected to be a wanderer, as long as the providence of God opens the way, and his Church calls." Cavey was disappointed with the religious feelings of those on this circuit, the classes being small, and religion at Newton being at a low ebb. The Newton Circuit had been formerly joined with the Olney Circuit and Cavey was among old friends. However he says "I had some pruning to do, nearly twenty were discontinued or expelled, seven died, fourteen were removed by letter, forty were received on probation, sixteen by letter, and seven removed without letter."

In November Cavey learned that he was appointed to the Massilon and Louisville Mission where he remained for

remained for two years. During this time his wife delivered her twelvth boy, and fourteenth child.

Cavey speaks during this year of those who came to church late very disapprovingly. He says it was "a very bad way to do. It discourages the preacher and it discourages the faithful that do come in time, and it hurries themselves so that their own minds are all in confusion, so they are little profitted by coming." He continued traveling on the Louisville Circuit and speaks of the passing of his birthday on January 1, 1854 saying "I am this day forty-five years old, a child of many mercies. Goodness and Mercy have followed me all the days of my life, through the assisting Grace of God. My remaining days I will spend in His praise 'Who died the whole world to redeem.' Be they many or few, my days are His due, and they all are devoted to Him."

Cavey at this time was able to give license of exhortation, and did so for the first time on January 3, 1854, to Brother J.C. Williams.

Cavey's righteous indignation was aroused by late-comers, as we have already seen, and by the vices prevailing on the frontier. At one time he says, "I preached to all females, the men having gone to a corn-husking."

This he did not condemn, considering it good and honest labor. On another occasion, however, he says "The Devil had an assembly, there being a ball within sound of the house of Worship." His tone on indignation and accusation is typical of the tone adopted by most Methodist ministers of the day. He gives us another of his personal feelings when he relates the death of a small girl due to scarlet fever. "I called in the morning at the house of Brother Duff's. No little Ellen to run out and tell (that) the preacher is coming. Her mortal remains were laid out near the door, some friends were preparing the shroud, and the sound of the carpenter's hammer reminded me that he was preparing the dear little girl's coffin. I could truly weep with those that wept." This eloquence at the death of someone else's child gives us an inkling of the grief that the man had felt at the death of so many of his own children.

During his rounds Cavey also obtained subscribers for such religious publications such as the Western Advocate, the Central Advocate, and the Sunday School Advocate. The report of a class meeting on March 9, 1854 shows his feelings toward other religions. He says "one good Baptist Brother ran off before the Preaching was through. Truth was too strong." He speaks frequently of attendance at Temperance meetings, and refers to his membership in the Sonso of Temperance Organ-

Organization. He also bemoans¹ the fact that there were very few meeting houses on the Circuit and that "nearly half my sabbath congregations had to be outside." He also gives an interesting description of a baptism, saying "One sister wanted to be emmersed, but we had to leave the house and go down to a creek, and there dip her under the water." Only rarely in these early years does Cavey show distress at leaving home for such periods of time. His wife was quite ill at one time, and he does say that it was "a hard trial to go far from home and leave her so sick. But the Lord knows what is best for us." At another time he speaks of concluding a two-day meeting early and going home saying "feeling that I had a body as well as a soul I went home and rested for the night." This shows some of the hardship he encountered as a Circuit rider.

An insight into some of the things that happened on the frontier during these days can be seen in Cavey's description of what he calls a strange thing. "A child fell into a well, and was drowned, while the children in whose care it was left let it lay for some hours in the well and told no person, though some came to the well for water to drink." This incident points out the attitude toward Death on the frontier. As we have seen from Cavey's own family, few children survived infancy, despite the high birth rate. Evidently the children in-

volved in this episode were not much concerned with death, having seen it occur so often.

At the 1854 Southern Illinois Conference Meeting held in Mount Vernon, Illinois, at the new dedicated church building there, Cavey, with eight others was received into full connection and was appointed to the Massilon Circuit Mission at a salary of \$300.00. He says of his own religious feeling shortly after the Conference "My soul has been drawn out much of late for the Salvation of souls. I want more of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit to enable me to preach the word with success. My soul thirsts for the outpouring of the spirit 'Oh Lord, Revive Thy work'" He traveled extensively during the year, preaching to both large and small congregations, and at the Albion Circuit Quarterly Conference. Of a meeting with an old friend in the clergy, the Reverent Joseph Butler, during the year he says "As iron sharpeneth iron so does the countenance of a man his friend." He says at the close of the year on the Massilon Mission "a pleasant year on the whole, though not very prosperous."

At the Conference Meeting of 1855 Cavey was re-appointed to the Massilon Mission and ordained a deacon in the Conference. His family during the past year had remained in Maysville, but in December of 1855, he moved them to Mount Erie, on the Massilon Circuit and lived in the Circuit's first parsonage. Again on his birth-

day poem of Wesley which concluded "Be they many or few, my days are His due and they all are devoted to Him." The year moved along, with a minimum of illness and death on the circuit. Although Cavey himself was taken ill with the Ague and "was not able to preach (I) had to learn to suffer the will of God," others on the circuit and in his family remained in relatively good health. He described during this year a Fourth of July celebration at which four Sunday Schols met for a picnic. There were approximately three hundred children present to enjoy the festivities and games. The Declaration of Independence was read aloud and a national address delivered by one of the local preachers and class leaders. Cavey was still suffering from the Ague, and was able to speak only briefly, but he tells us that the day was a highly successful one at which everyone enjoyed themselves immensely. He also tells us, a typical male fashion, that "there were plenty of cakes and pies for refreshments."

At the Conference of 1856, held at Salem, Illinois Cavey was appointed to the Walnut Hill Circuit. He was also made a member of the Tract Cause Committee (probably because of his former work for the American Tract Society) and a member of one of the education committees, the Visiting Committee for the Southern Illinois Female Academy. The new move to Walnut Hill was a new experience,

for here Cavey was a stranger to all the people. All his other circuits had been in areas in which he was acquainted with the settlers, either from his work on the Tract Society Cause, or because he had attended camp meetings in the area. The family lived in a fine parsonage located at the community of Walnut Hill. On this circuit he preached at places such as Antioch, Pleasant Grove, Hopewell, Zion Hill and Locust Grove. On this circuit he again had an experience with baptism by immersion in a creek, describing it as "a cold time, (I) had to break the ice to Baptize." During this year, Cavey still worked as an agent for the American Tract Society, which had its main headquarters in Cincinnati, Ohio. He tells us that he carried on several correspondences during the year with relatives and with the Central Office of the Society.

During his record of the year Cavey also cites many examples of the rowdy behavior that the Methodists scorned on the frontier, even though it was the prevailing attitude to behave thusly. He describes one of the favorite practices on the frontier, the raucous rather than religious celebration of Christmas Eve, in unfavorable terms, saying "(I) was kept awake nearly all night by the foolish practice of shooting Christmas Guns." He would probably be dismayed by the popular practice today of shooting firecrackers and guns on New Year's Eve, and the Fourth of July, if we can consider this comment

as typical of his ideals. He also describes a discourse heard in Walnut Hill during one of his visits home saying "heard..a Discourse of Polished, Sugar-Coated Compbellism. May the Lord defend His Truth." This shows the fear of a devout minister of the dangers of heresy creeping into the frontiersman's Methodism. This sugar-coated medicine that Cavey is describing in his diary refers to the doctrines of the Campbellite sect, a splinter group of Protestantism in the nineteenth century which is today known as the Disciples of Christ. The group advocated the taking of Communion weekly, baptism by immersion only (as opposed to the Methodist concept of immersion, sprinkling, or pouring) and the theory that with the coming of Christ the entire Law of the Hebrews had been abrogated. The group was at one time connected with the Baptists, but later separated on doctrinal grounds and followed their own leaders only. At the time that Cavey writes of them they were rapidly gaining communicants on the frontier, due to an even greater emotional appeal than the other denominations. Their number was counted at around 118,000. Their appeal to the masses was feared by the older, and by comparison, more conservative, denominations, such as the Methodists and Presbyterians. Cavey's comments echo this view.²⁷

During the year he also attended several trials of laymen in the Church, one at which the brother was

27. Olmstead, op cit, p.306.

acquitted because of lack of witnesses for his un-Christian conduct, and a second at which one member was expelled from the church rolls for milking her neighbor's cow. On another occasion Cavey cited three members for trial at Rome, Illinois. He calls this "very painful work" and shows severe consternation at the behavior of these members of his flock. He mentions several other trials during this year at which charges were dropped because of lack of sufficient evidence, and another at which a very troublesome member who indulged in frivolous pasttimes and had appeared inebriated in front of witnesses was expelled. The entire year was one of great trial to the minister personally because of these events. He felt that he had failed in some way because they had behaved so poorly.

One September 23, 1857 the Annual Conference was again held, and Cavey was appointed to the Hickory Hill Circuit. He served again on the Tract Cause Committee, one of his favorite causes, and on the Examining Committee for Elder's Orders. The family resided during this year at Council Bluff, Illinois in the Circuit parsonage. On his birthday in 1858 Cavey says "I am this day forty-nine years old. I feel through Mercy Heaven Born and Heaven Bound." On March 7, 1858 he again became

become a Father, this time of a daughter, Sarah Selinia. He states, during his recording of this year his disgust for the users of alcohol saying "Preached at Middleton. Here there were three or four drunken men cursing in the streets like Demons." He held a ten day camp-meeting with the help of a local preacher of the Methodist Church and a Brother of the Baptist church who "filled in and rendered efficient help." The meeting was highly successful, with fourteen joining the church and over twenty conversions and reclaimed backsliders.

At the Annual Conference held in 1858 Cavey was reappointed to the revised Hickory Hill Circuit. Much of the territory was taken off the eastern part of the circuit, and a great deal added on the south and west of it. He was again appointed to the Committee for the Tract Cause, being by this time almost a permanent member of the committee. The year on the circuit began with a burst of energy--often seeing him preach seven times in three or four days. He describes one of these two day meetings, at which he was the only minister present, saying "I had to try and enabled to throw myself under the 'Wings of the Cherubim' and Glory be to God, he sent help from his Holy Habitation, and while sinners trembled the saints of the most high shouted for joy."

In July of 1858 the diary that we have concludes. The final page describes the cowering of sinners at the power of the Lord saying "the power of the Lord arrested some sinners who cried for mercy. The people of God shouted for joy." The remaining portion of the diary was lost in the following years. The final years of the life of Cavey Lambert are however recorded in the Conference Records of the Methodist Church in southern Illinois. These records show that in 1859 Cavey served on the Committee for the Tract Cause, and was appointed to the Louisville Mission as minister. Here he undoubtedly found old and dear friends, having served the mission when it was part of the Massilon Circuit in 1854 and 1855. At the Conference this year he was also ordained an Elder in the Salem District and the Southern Illinois Conference. In 1860 he again was returned to the Louisville Mission. However during the year his health failed, and prevented him from adequately fulfilling his position as he had been able to do in past years.

At the Conference of 1861 Cavey's character was passed as usual, but this time in a special consideration. His health was failing rapidly, and he was unable to endure the rugged conditions necessitated by riding a circuit. He was granted a superannuated relationship and a stipend of eighty dollars a year as a retired

minister. Superannuated is defined in the Conference records as "worn-out" which many circuit riders certainly were, and at an early age. During the summer of this conference year Cavey taught school at old Pinch again receiving \$36.00 for his efforts. The family was residing at their farm in the neighborhood while Cavey rested his health. At the 1862 Conference he remained on the list of superannuated preachers, receiving another eighty dollars as his stipend. He rode the Mount Erie Circuit as a supplementary minister during this year, and retained his vote in conference affairs. He was appointed to the Local Preacher's for Deacon's Orders Examining Committee, and he also served on the Tract Cause Committee. By 1864 he had regained his health sufficiently to return to the strenuous task of riding a circuit, and was appointed to serve again on the Hickory Hill Mission. He began his labors for the Tract Causes Committee again at this time also. His good health however prevailed for only one year under the rough circumstances surrounding the life of a circuit rider. The repeated trips through high waters in the spring and snow in the winter aggravated his poor health conditions and forced him into retirement again. In 1865 it was necessary that he become re-super-annuated. He continued to serve the Conference on the Centenary Committee however. His family address is given at this

time as Farrington, Illinois. In 1866 he remained on the Centenary Committee, and his pension was increased twenty dollars over the previous years to \$120.00, and he was the highest paid superannuated minister in the Conference. The years 1867-1873 Cavey remained as a superannuated minister, preaching only occasionally in his own community. His address was given as Grayville, Illinois, in White County. They retained the farm in Old Pinch which was being farmed by the couple's eldest son. At the Conference held in the fall of 1873 he was reported on the deceased list of the Conference. The date of his death given was March 13, 1873, at the age of sixty four years, two months, and thirteen days. He was survived by his wife Charlotte, three children, and several grandchildren.

Conference records of the Methodist Church include short biographies of each deceased minister during the year. The biography of Cavey Lambert is printed at the end of the minutes of the 1873 Conference, giving first a brief sketch of his life which includes the dates of his birth, immigration from England, marriage, ordination and death. It also gives the total list of the missions he served and the years in which he served them. The summary concludes with a eulogy paying tribute

to his character with these words--"To know him was to love him. He was true to all the interests of the church--always a safe counsellor of the preacher. It is truly said of him 'he was full of faith and the Holy Ghost.'" Thus ends the life of Cavey Lambert. Its significance is not great historically, yet it is illustrative of how a typical circuit rider lived, and served his Church and God.

28. Proceedings of the Southern Illinois Conference
of the Methodist CHURCH. 1873. p. 105.

SECTION III

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CIRCUIT RIDERS

Thus far, this paper has dealt with two major areas-- setting the scene in Southern Illinois for the period 1830-1875, and presenting the life of one circuit rider through facts from the Conference Records of the Methodist Church, and through comments and events excerpted from his own diary. The author's chief purpose, however, is not to dwell upon Cavey Lambert, making him into a figure out of proportion with his own significance. Rather, the author's purpose, or thesis, is to prove the importance and influence of circuit riders on the frontier, using Mr. Lambert as an example. We have seen that Cavey Lambert was a simple, God-fearing man, a migrant from England, who gradually and willingly devoted his entire life and work to the service of the Methodist Church. He was one among many of his kind--the all-important circuit riders.

The comments made by Cavey on the subject of religious feeling on the frontier illustrate the prevailing attitude toward the subject on the part of the majority of settlers on the frontier. Following the American Revolution a decline in religious feeling took place--the logical decline that follows every revolution. Inevitably a breakdown in morals follows this decline in religious be-

liefs. The mass migrations that took place following the Revolution, during the War of 1812, and as a result of the consequences of the agrarian and industrial revolutions that were taking place in Europe also diminished concern for the Christian faith among the settlers.²⁸ The moral attitudes of the men and women on the frontier were, therefore, of a quite low caliber. They could be described as the baser passions of man given free rein. Though in the 1830's there began to be a greater vocalized public interest in the questions of morality and social reforms, individual moral evils were still widely prevalent. Peter Cartwright expressed on one occasion great concern over the corruption that was present in the legislature of Illinois. Among the private citizens the consumption of alcoholic beverages took place at an exorbitant rate; drunken men often roamed the streets of the frontier settlements and broke up the class meetings and preaching services of the church.²⁹ Gross says of the Methodist circuit riders that they exemplified what may be called "muscular" Christianity. They had to look after themselves, as no law enforcement officials were readily available to serve them. The rowdies and drunks that

28. Gross, John O. The Beginnings of American Methodism. Abingdon Press, New York, New York. 1961. p. 63

29. Barclay, Wade C. Early American Methodism, V.I. The Board of Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Church. New York, New York, 1949. p. 219.

broke up the meetings had to deal with, often by brute force by the circuit rider. It has been said that the "fists of the circuit riders knocked the devil out of many sinners."³⁰

Cavey Lambert cites us examples of this, and of other unChristian conduct. He says at one point, shortly after his arrival from England, that he had formed one impression concerning the religious feelings of the people he had come to settle among. He tells us that "Infidelity stalked forth with a bold front." On another occasion he speaks disdainfull of the attractions of a ball for his congregation, of drunken men "cursing in the street like Demons," of a woman expelled from the Church for "milking her neighbor's cow," and of the trial and expulsion of a layman from the church for "unfit Christian conduct in front of witnesses." He also speaks sadly of congregations where religious feelings were low and other past times kept people from attending preaching and class meetings.

On the other hand, there was some public concern for morality, especially among church members. Organizations for moral causes and temperance were found in a large number of communities, including Cavey Lambert's home area, Old Finch. We already know of Cavey's work for the American Tract Society, and of some of the pamphlets

30. Gross, op cit. p. 70.

and distributed concerning moral questions. We also find in Cavey's diary records of his attending several meetings of one of these organizations for morality, The Sons of Temperance Organization. The temperance movement under this name was state-wide and had been organized and operating quite successfully since the late 1830's. Each area had its own lodge or society, which was independently organized in the area, but affiliated in connection with others like it in the state. Each lodge was known as a "division." The Division in Old Pinch was known by the title the "Faithful Division Number Five Hundred and Seven of the Sons of Temperance of the State of Illinois," indicating by its number (507) that there were a large number of such lodges in operation throughout the state. The name was too long to be used in common conversation, however, and the Society was usually referred to simply as the "Division" or as the "Sons of Temperance Club." The age limit for each division was usually set at sixteen in order to encourage junior members and other young people to begin following the movement at an early age. The activities of the Divisions were not confined solely to temperance, but often dealt with what ever was needed to be done to improve the area or neighborhood in which the Division was located. These organizations did such things as distribute literature, visit and assist up with the sick and aged, help the needy citizens of the community or neighborhood, and keep a faithful and watchful eye on the young

people to keep them from visiting saloons and other places of ill repute in the neighborhood or near-by communities. Many meetings of the Divisions were held in secret with only certified and official members attending (these members had to be in good standing in order to receive notice of such meetings). Others were held that were open to the public population and took various forms. They were often exhibitions, shows, or literary programs, always with the subject matter emphasizing temperance and other worthy lines of thought. Even minstrel and variety shows were put on by the members to provide the young people of the community with innocent amusements that would divert their attention away from places where liquor and gambling could be obtained. These societies flourished until the years of the Civil War, during which many members seemed to feel that the Union Societies supporting the soldiers could benefit from their attention more than the temperance cause. After the war ended, their efforts to keep the citizens satisfied with unintoxicating drink and un sinful entertainment, and to protect from the temptations of corn liquor and moonshine were renewed.³¹

These societies operated on the frontier on much the same principles as many of the temperance societies of today, but in some areas at least, they had considerably more

31. Briggs, op cit. p. 126-127.

than they do today.

He also tells us that in some places however religious feeling ran high, "the people of the Lord were blessed." He also speaks approvingly of the more wholesome entertainments such as corn-husking and Fourth of July picnics. These entertainments, the celebrations following weddings, and the song-fests and camp meetings are examples of the religious exuberance that the Methodists wanted to substitute for the more rowdy pleasures.

The migration of the Lambert family is also an example of how many of the settlers came to America. They came in 1829 because of conditions that were becoming oppressive in England. These stemmed from economic and religious persecution, and from the general disorder arising out of the Industrial Revolution. The increasing mobility of the population was robbing the farmer such as John Lambert of his means of livelihood and his social standing. The family thus decided to leave the mother country and travel to the new United States. The sale of the family estates allowed them to make their voyage comfortably and to purchase a large quantity of land upon their arrival in southern Illinois. This affluence disproves the Turner theory that the west provided a safety valve for people when times became bad. Although times were bad in England when the Lambert family migrated, they would not have been able to claim the "free" western land

Turner speaks of *in* his theory. Rather they had to be of the class that they were, the middle class, in order to have sufficient funds to purchase land. Land costs, as we have seen, were not exorbitant--very cheap compared to prices today in fact--being only \$1.62 per acre in general and \$1.25 per acre in the area the Lamberts settled in--but the land was not free and had to be purchased in quite large plots. Their migration also illustrates the influence of an advertising plan such as Birbeck and Flower's, and shows the value of the English settlement of Albion, Illinois. The family thus illustrates the type of settlers who came to this specific area. This migration however does not bear out the theory that new settlers neglected their religious faith because of their necessary preoccupation of coping with the rugged conditions of frontier life. The elder Lamberts remained strongly devout, looking for meetings and meeting places immediately upon their arrival, and attending meetings and classes whenever possible. Even Cavey, though not a complete believer, remained true to the religion of his father, and despised the general infidelity that prevailed among the other settlers.

The fervent conversion that Cavey Lambert himself experiences typifies the emotional aspect of religion on the frontier. His wife, through lucky chance says Cavey,

had become a "seeker of religion" shortly before their marriage. Cavey felt himself to be a believer, but a backslider. His conversion followed stages, during which he erected "the family altar frequently but always let it fall down." He attended camp meetings, openly joined those on the mourner's bench, and asked the true believers and people of God that they pray that he might enjoy the same religious fervor that they did. His membership in the church came before his actual moment of conviction, but his real conversion came finally and strongly during a day of prayer in his own corn field on the farm. This religious fervor that he gained is the same that later brought convictions of religion to those sinners he preached to at camp meetings and services. Cavey's metamorphosis from unbeliever to convert to religious worker and layman to supplying minister and exhorter to circuit rider and saver of the souls of others was not unrare among circuit riders. Gross tells us that many of the early preachers, including Francis Foythress and Peter Cartwright "were converted from dissipated lives into 'zealous soul savers.'"³² In this way Cavey illustrates one of the many aspects of the circuit rider. This conversion from a "dissipated" life often provided the travelling preacher with a convincing point of departure on which to base his sermons. Through citing examples from his own past to point out the evils of their life, he could implore

^{32s} Gross, op cit, p. 66.

his listeners to leave their ways of sins, as he had, and become at peace with themselves, their fellow men and God. This greatly heightened, in many cases, the already powerful influences of such a man's sermons, and made his listeners feel more akin to their pastor. He was a human being just as they were who had made mistakes. In this way they were what is called "down to earth preachers; for their sermons possessed both substance and nourishment,"³³ and were ones with which the listener could identify and sympathize.

The circuit rider could thus change the lives of his frontier listeners, causing them to turn from rowdiness to religion. The people realized that the pastor lived under as difficult (if not more difficult in many cases) conditions as they themselves did. His salary was very low; his circuits large; and his hours long. He often travelled for a month without returning home. The circuit rider was concerned with not only their spiritual, but also their domestic, political, and economic conditions. He too was a patriot and citizen of the United States, and yearned for democracy and economic advancement just as they did. They could identify themselves and their problems with him and strive to be like him in his devotion and acceptance of his circumstances.

33. Gross, op city p. 69

The life of a circuit rider illustrates the life on the frontier at this time very well. Although cities were established in which the living accommodations were both convenient and comfortable, in the rural areas the going was not at all easy. Southern Illinois remained sparsely settled with few opportunities for comfortable living. The circuit riders family moved often, frequently yearly from one mission (or in some cases station) to another. Cavey tells us several times of moving his family. This plan operated because the circuit rider was by it more readily available to a wider range of people, and because often a minister could become so well acquainted and fond of his parishioners that he would overlook their minor transgressions. Obviously this changing and travelling frequently discouraged marriage among the "itinerants." Many would give up traveling and the ministry when they married. Cavey, however, did not even enter the ministry for twenty years after his marriage and says that he "would travel until he was unable to do so." He cites us another example of a minister whose wife stood beside him for thirty years while he rode the circuit and preached. Examples are given us of the rules in the Methodist Discipline that discouraged marriage for travelling ministers, and even discouraged mingling with the opposite sex. The rules stated that no minister should marry without first

consulting his brethren, or fellow ministers. They were also to "converse sparingly and cautiously with women, especially young women."³⁴ The reason for this is quite obvious. A married minister would present appointment problems for many circuits wanted only single men and many married ministers would not want to leave home for such long periods of time and would prefer stations rather than circuits. These attitudes began to change after 1836 as more and more men desired both marriage and the ministry. Cavey's wife Charlotte presents an illustration of a devoted frontier minister's wife. She often accompanied her husband on his journies over the circuit, never complaining of the hardships she encountered both on the trips and when being left behind she had to care for her home and children alone.

Not only this difficulty concerning home life confronted the circuit rider. The minister had to travel in a difficult era, often under extenuating conditions. A folk saying in rural America still is in use when bad weather prevails that shows how faithful the riders were to their duty. It says "Nobody was out except the crows and the Methodist ministers,"³⁵ and often no one was.

Bernard A. Weisberger tells us that the circuit riders went

where sinners were in need of the saving word. No settlement was too rundown or too remote for them. They roughed it along trails in the snow

34. Gross, op cit, p. 67.

35. Ibid, p. 71.

and rain, taking their chances...They put up where they could find local hospitality, which usually meant corn bread and a spot for sleeping...They spent a good part of their lives cold, wet, verminous, and saddle sore, and if they did not die young of consumption, they could expect an old age of rheumatism and dyspnea.³⁶

Cavey tells us something of this aspect of the circuit riders life in his diary when he speaks of traveling through the high water of the rivers in the spring, through the deep snow, and of getting lost in the prairie grass when travelling from appointment to appointment. He also impresses us with the distance travelled and the long hours spent in preaching when he tells us that in one year on the Lawrenceville Circuit he rode over 3,300 miles and preached 330 times in twelve months. The circuit rider, however, expected to work under such conditions. Cavey does not speak of them disgustedly at any time, but in a matter of fact manner of frankness and calm acceptance of his lot.

The lack of medical care on the frontier is shown to us by an example in Cavey Lambert's life. He fathered fifteen children, only to have all but three die before their second birthday. These children were in most part victims of the dreaded diseases of the frontier-- measles, flue, Ague (a malarial fever), pneumonia and typhoid. Cavey was fortunate that he had not lost his wife

36. Weigberger, Bernard A. They Gathered at the River. Little, Brown, and Company. Boston, 1958. p. 45.

in childbirth, as so many of the men on the frontier did. This suffering because of death joined the minister with his people for they encountered much the same problems in their life. The acceptance of death was automatic, for the fact of the presence of it could not be denied. This ~~can~~ acceptance of death can be seen vividly in the incident of the child drowning in the well that is recounted by Cavey Lambert in his diary. The availability of medical service was perhaps felt more acutely in neighborhoods such as old Finch where the settlement was still sparse than in other, more populous areas. Chicago, or old Fort Dearborne, had by this time become an important settlement, and along with several other cities such as Saint Louis, Missouri, and Shawneetown, Illinois undoubtedly had greater access to such medical services as were essential. Another factor in disease in the Old Finch area was probably the spring flood--a yearly occurrence, when both the creeks (Bonpas, and Nigger) and the Big Wabash River overran their banks and flooded the bottem lands. Cavey speaks frequently of the Ague, a malarial fever, being prevalent and was even a victim of its disease. The illness's spread was undoubtedly aided by the prevalence of mosquitos and other bacteria carrying insects that appeared after the spring floods. Medical vaccinations were not yet widely accepted either and smallpox, typhoid fever,

and malaria were frequently occurring diseases. The illness that Cavey Lambert contracted in 1861, and which lead ultimately to his superannuation was typhoid fever, probably contracted by the drinking water he used while riding the circuit. At all times, then, disease and death were accepted as natural occurrences, to be dreaded to be sure, but also to be subordinated to the real problems of living in the pioneer days. This subordination was carried to a far greater extent than is ever done so today, and when a death did occur, the religious frontiersmen always felt that the deceased had gone to a far better life.

In Section I of this paper, the economy of Southern Illinois, agriculture, was discussed at length, with a naming of the most important crops and a discussion of how the farmer proceeded in the cultivation process. The problems that he faced were also touched upon.³⁷ This agricultural economy was at the heart of the settler's existence. The farmer or settler was primarily interested in one thing: his livelihood. This meant two important things, having enough to eat and having a place for himself and his family to live. The first buildings the settler wanted then were a house, or cabin, and a place to keep his animals. Until the 1850's usually the only buildings on the frontier, and especially in these remote

37. See Section I, page 5, for a discussion of this agricultural economy on the frontier.

areas were of these types, with possibly a school house or court house. We have discussed the creation of the Union Church in Old Pinch and the erection of the building in 1833, but in most communities no such building was available for the ministers' use. The circuit rider, therefore, had to preach in whatever facilities were available to him. In some communities of size, such as Albion, Illinois, this often meant the court or school house. In others, these public buildings were not open for religious services. In some villages the barroom was the first place to be opened for preaching, and in Rising Suns and New Albany, Indiana, the first sermons preached by Methodist ministers were preached in taverns.³⁸ In more remote areas it frequently meant preaching in one of the members of the congregation's home.

During the early years of settlement in Illinois these homes were largely of the "log-cabin" variety. In Old Pinch, the homes seemed to be a bit more modern than in other areas, probably because most of the settlers were from England, because they were more wealthy than the average frontiersman was, (as we have seen in the Lamberts and their immediate purchases of farm land) and because of their proximity to the wealthy Morris and Flower community of Albion, Illinois. However, the early

38. Barclay, op city, p. 238.

homes were still "pioneer" in basic nature, despite these advantages. They were usually built of unfinished timber, taken from the wooded river bottom areas. The logs were hewed by hand, the puncheons were split, and the clapboard usually used on the roofs was finished by a process known as "riving." The early cabins usually were only one large room, and the majority of activity in the house centered around the fireplace. The furniture usually consisted of a crude table and benches, and make-shift beds. By 1845, however, frame houses were beginning to replace the log cabins as the settlers finally succeeded in conquering their farming problems and could center their attention upon living facilities. Cook stoves replaced the old fireplaces, the houses had more rooms, and the furniture was greatly modernized and more professionally finished. ³⁹ By the time that Caverly Lambert began to ride a circuit, the homes in which he preached were largely of the frame house variety. However, the circuit riders in general made use of whatever facilities were available to them, whether log cabins, frame houses, or even barns. By the 1860's the settlers were beginning to erect a greater number of actual church buildings, sometimes interdenominational, but more often for one specific congregation. These were made available to the travelling ministers of all faiths, 39. Briggs, op cit, pp. 102-104.

and were also used as general meeting places for the community.⁴⁰ With the coming of the war, these buildings were pressed into use as hospitals and meetings places for the Union societys, and ~~for~~ the women's organizations that provided the ~~armies~~ with clothing and bandages.

The circuit rider not only prevailed upon the hospitality of the settlers for the use of their homes, and barns as meeting places, but also as places for him to spend the night. Along the trails that they rode hotels and inns were available in the larger communities but not in the rural areas. There were also places known as stable stands which combined the features of a tavern, an inn, and a large stable.⁴¹ Despite the fact that they would preach in such a place if absolutely necessary, the men of God were not inclined to stay over night in places that served liquor, had "loose women" working, and often had signs reading "Entertainment for Man and Beast."⁴² Instead they preferred to put up (or stay over night) with members of their congregations, who were also pleased to have the honor of keeping the preacher in their homes for the evening. The travelling ministers usually stayed in different homes each time they made the rounds of the circuit in order to get to know all the members of their congregation well and to distribute

40. Johnson, op cit, p. 47.

41. Ibid, p. 51.

the burden of hospitality.

There is a simile "as ignorant as a Methodist minister" still in use today in many areas. This expression is a carryover from the very earliest days of the New United States. When the colonies separated from the mother country, ecclesiastical as well as political and social independence was gained. The founders of Methodism in England, the Wesleys, were obligated to recall the majority of the English born and educated clergymen to return to the mother Church in Britain. Most of these men went willingly, as their loyalties naturally lay with the king and with the English rather than the colonists. A clear-cut break was made with English Methodism. The Methodist Episcopal Church of America then became the first indigenous episcopal church in the United States.⁴³ The organization of this new church was carried on largely by two remaining bishops, Asbury and Coke, with the aid of American born patriot ministers. Many of these early itinerant ministers were uneducated and the majority of them were quite young. In fact, at the meeting of the first Conference held west of the Alleghenies (in 1790) four of the six preachers who received appointments were under twenty-five years of age. Bishop Galloway has said of the Methodist ministers at this time that "thousands of the Methodist preachers were riding circuits before

⁴³. Gross, op cit, p. 64.

they were old enough to vote or needed to use a razor."⁴⁴ These early ministers actually were for the large part quite young and relatively uneducated, but the simile about their ignorance persisted long after there was any justification for its use. The majority of ministers on the circuits in the 1800's were, to modern standards, lacking in education and culture, but they were no different than any of the rest of the settlers in this aspect, just as they were not any different in dress, manners, or way of living. It has been said that they used poor English, but most of the settlers did, and indeed most of the population today does. In his diary, Cavey Lambert frequently uses poor sentence structure and grammar and consistently misspells words, but he was still qualified to teach school at different times in his career. His education had been obtained in England, and it is said that he was educated "well above the standards of his time," even in his mother country of England.

The circuit riders of the West were not ashamed of their lack of formal academic and religious training and often boasted of having graduated from "Brush College, a school more ancient but less pretentious than Yale, Harvard or Princeton."

Bishop Asbury once answered a question put to him

44. Gross, op cit, p. 66.

by an educated eastern minister about how untrained men such as the circuit riders could become such superior ministers thusly:

We tell one another all we know, and then use it at once. A penny used is better than an idle dollar. You study books, we study men, the Bible, the hymn book, and Mr. Wesley's sermons, and are instant in season and out of season. I once picked up a fiddler and he became a saint and a great preacher.⁴⁵

These men, however, though lacking in formal training, were educated, albeit by themselves. Many of them ready as they rode their horses along their circuits. In fact, the Discipline of the Methodist Church calls for five hours of daily reading and study by each minister. These men also had instructions set down by their Conferences as to what to study. These instructions included such things as history, geography, grammar and rhetoric, ecclesiastical theory, theology, great sermons, and philosophy.⁴⁶ The circuit riders earnest and diligently applied their limited opportunities and enlarged their educational backgrounds until they made themselves into some of the best educated men on the entire frontier. Their self training was not of the quality of the Presbyterian ministers who were seminary trained in the East, but they did become learned and cultured men. The American Tract Society and the Methodist Church made avail-

45. Gross, op cit, p. 68. Quoted from History of Union County, Kentucky, 1886.

46. See Section I, page 10.

able to them many of the books they needed to carry out their self-study program. They used the material that they learned from this program to bring additional substance to their sermons in a way that caused the frontiersman to highly respect them. The wives of the ministers often were well educated also, either from the same self-training program that their husbands followed, or by formal training obtained in the East, and managed despite their frequent moves to often maintain schools for the frontiersman's children.⁴⁷ The circuit riders were greatly admired because of their knowledge by the majority of the settlers, and were regarded as a source of inspiration because they had usually come from such humble beginnings and had managed by their own efforts to become so learned and respected. These circuit riders have often been described as the "giants of the days" and were described by one early writer eloquently. He says of them:

(They were) hardy itinerants, without education save that which most of them found in some rustic school, without any patronage, derived from social position, with an entire abnegation of self and worldly prosperity, with the certainty of meeting contempt and persecution at every step, with hardly "scrip or purse" for immediate necessities, cast themselves in the care and favor of God, and with only their native genius, and guided

47. Barclay, op cit, p. 222.

by a Spirit Divine, began a work, the greatness of which the world has not fully conceived, and the glorious end of which the world shall never see.⁴⁸

These circuit riders were proud men, unashamed of their lack of education and unashamed of their great religious heritage. Their calm acceptance of circumstances, and their humble assumption of the duties assigned them is indicative of this. They were found everywhere as Theodore Summers tells us in his book Biographical Sketches of Eminent Itinerant Ministers. From his illustration we can see that they were ready to meet any circumstance. When a settler in the West said to one of them "What! Have you found me already? Another Methodist preacher!" the minister he spoke to, a Reverent Nolley, answered him "My friend, if you go to heaven you will find Methodist preachers there; and if you go to hell, I am afraid you will find some there; and you see how it is in this world. You had better make your peace with us, and be at peace."⁴⁹

This devotion to duty of many circuit riders made them almost saint-like in their behavior. They prayed continually, kneeling as they did so, for the Discipline stated that any other posture was considered irreverent, and these ministers were certainly not irreverent. As we have seen from Cavey Lambert's records, all their

48. Gross, p. 69. Quoted from Scudder, American Methodism.
 49. Ibid, p. 72. Quoted from Summer, Biographical Sketches of Eminent Itinerant Ministers.

efforts were devoted to the Lord and His Cause. Birthdays, holidays, joys, and griefs--all were occasions to follow a pattern of praise and worship. We remember that Cavey on his birthdays often quoted the poem of John Wesley's that said "Be they many, or be they few, my days are all His due," and that at his return home to find all well, he always offered a prayer of thanksgiving. Even the deaths of his children were accepted with a Christian and saintly tranquillity. "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. Praise be the name of the Lord": A tribute to this saintly and prayerful quality is seen in the statement that the Methodist ministers "not only covered the frontier with horseprints but left the marks of human knees wherever they crusaded."⁵⁰ This attitude was aided by their studies of the great theological thinkers and ascetics, and by the study of the sermons of early ministers. It was also aided by the instructions put forth by John Wesley himself and by Bishop Asbury in the very first Discipline of the Methodist Church utilized by the Methodist ministers in the United States. This Discipline instructed the ministers to work to be holy themselves and to encourage others in holiness by following a prescribed pattern of behavior in all their travels. They were to:

Go into every house and teach everyone therein, young and old, to be Christian inwardly

50. Gross, op cit, p, 73.

and outwardly; fix it in their memory; write ~~it~~ on their heart. In order to do this there must be line upon line precept upon precept, ... What patience, What love, what knowledge, is requisite for this.

Where there are ten children, meet them at least an hour every week.

Will you diligently instruct the children in every place?

Talk with them each time you see any of them at home.

Diligently instruct and vehemently exhort the parents at their own house.

Preach expressly on education. "But I have no gift for it!" Gift or not gift, you are to do it, else you are not called to be a Methodist preacher. Do it as you can until you can do it as you would. Pray earnestly for the gift and use the means for it.⁵¹

These attributes of the Methodist minister are to be found in Cavey Lambert's life. He frequently speaks in his diary of meeting with the children at his various appointments, and of working to organize Sunday Schools on the circuits he preached on. He also speaks of talking to the children at every opportunity, and in the case of the account of little Ellen McDuff's death we can see that he was a great friend of the children for he says "No more little Ellen to run out and greet me; and say the preacher's come." He also speaks of exhorting to the parents to educate their children well in Christian precepts in order that they might grow into fine Christian citizens. He does so with his own children quite well also. He works for education within the Church by serving on the Visiting Committee for the Southern Illinois Female Academy and by working with the Sunday School leaders.

⁵¹. Gross, op cit, p. 55.

He often speaks of meeting with these leaders and with the class leaders to discuss the problems that they encountered during his absence from the appointment. He also worked for education in the community, often doubling as a school teacher, as we have seen.

Despite this saintly attribute however, the circuit riders were well capable of handling themselves and any problems that arose on their circuits. Frequently rowdies came to break up meetings or cause a disturbance outside the meeting house. The Church could not officially approve any physical action on the part of the ministers--what was called "muscular" Christianity--especially of the type practiced by such circuit riders as Peter Cartwright. Yet the earliest American bishop, Bishop Asbury, said on one occasion to a band of rowdies who were harassing a minister "You must remember that all our brothers in the Church are not yet sanctified; I advise you to let them alone; for if you get them angry and the devil should get into them, they are the strongest and hardest men to fight and conquer in the world. I advise you if you do not like them, to go home and let them alone."⁵² The ability to cope with any circumstance gave the frontier preacher added respect. He handled himself just as the other settlers did, not expecting special favors and gentle treatment just because he was a man of God. In fact many

Gross, op cit

52. Gross, op cit, p. 70.

participated in wrestling matches and feats of strength and were among the strongest men on the frontier.

The circuit rider was able to influence his congregations for a number of reasons. The most important of these was his devotion to the church and his personal faith. In addition, the frontiersman could identify with him because he lived under the same difficult conditions that the settler did. He had made himself into an educated man and provided a goal for the settler to work toward. He was not a "softie" but as vigorous and strong as any of the men who worked daily on the farm. Frequently he led a somewhat dissipated life and had been converted himself. He was persistent in his soul-winning quest, and went wherever his duty called. He was diligent about performing his tasks and practical in the advice he gave. The religion that he preached offered vitality and emotional satisfaction to replace the blisterous merry-making of the frontier. He calmed the wave of immorality that was sweeping the frontier.

Methodist ministers on the frontier were more than merely soul winners. They were civilizing agents that in many cases kept the frontier from sinking in barbarism. They adopted strong moral positions by which they lived, and strong religious ideals by which they preached. They were willing to go where they were needed to combat the evil that reigned rampant in many sections of the west. They brought not just spiritual, but practical advice to the settlers. They carried messages, spread news, and

evil that raged rampant on many sections of the frontier. They brought not just spiritual, but practical advice to the settlers. They carried messages, spread news, provided inspiration, and converted sinners all at the same time. Their devotion to duty has rarely been surpassed. An example of their zeal can be seen in the increase in American Methodism between the years 1800-1860. In 1810, one out of every thirty nine persons in the United States was a Methodist. By 1840, the percentage had increased and one out of every nineteen persons was a Methodist. The growth of the Church from 1800-1830 was seven fold, and the Methodist Church soon became the largest Protestant denomination in America. By 1860 one third of the Protestant population of the United States was Methodist.⁵³ This enormous increase can only be due not to new emigrants but to the fervor of the ministers who brought large numbers of converts into the Church. Cavey Lambert is an example of this type of man, not great in his glory, but tremendous in a small way. In the circuits he served on the sparsely settled Southern Illinois frontier he strived to continue the ideals of John Wesley as much as possible. His acceptance of conditions, his struggling to carry on his work despite almost insurmountable obstacles are to be admired not as unique, but as typical

53. Gross, op cit, p. 82.

to the circuit rider. We have seen the tribute paid this one man upon his death by his fellow ministers. Perhaps the biggest praise however would be to simply say "He did his work well."

President Theodore Roosevelt has paid a tribute to the circuit riders of the Methodist Church and the work that they did in a way that well illustrates their lasting significance. In an address to the Methodist Episcopal Church General Conference in 1908 he said:

The whole country is under a debt of gratitude to the Methodist circuit riders, the Methodist pioneer preachers, whose movement westward kept pace with the movement of the frontier, who shared all the hardships in the life of the frontiersman, while at the same time ministering to that frontiersman's spiritual needs, and seeing that his pressing material cares, and the hard and grinding poverty of his life did not wholly extinguish the divine fire within his soul.⁵⁴

This is how the circuit rider was important to the frontier. He offered an example to the settler, lived by it, and helped others in their quests to obtain the same spiritual blessings that he had received.

53. Gross, p. 73.

54. Gross, op cit, p. 73.

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